

Minutes, Public Works Committee
Meeting Tuesday, June 5, 7:00

Attending: Michael Cann, Rob Crowner (chair), Don George, Charlie Moran, Vince O'Connor; Guilford Mooring; Walter Wolnik.

Also attending for the first agenda item: Amherst Historical Commission members Edith MacMullen (Chair), Gai Carpenter, Lyle Dent, Michael Hanke, Lynda Faye, James Wald. Jonathan Tucker, Town Planner; Joe Larson.

1. South Amherst Common

The Historical Commission brought to the PWC for comment its draft "scope of work" for the survey of the South Amherst Common. Vince O'Connor asked that included in the survey be a pattern-boring for artifacts. Edith MacMullen noted that there was money for archaeological work in the survey budget; Jon Tucker noted that there had been little activity, and no buildings, on the Common, so there would not likely be much in the way of artifacts; Guilford Mooring described the normal process: a level 1 search; if anything is found in a particular area, a level 2 search of that area; if the level 2 search turns up anything, then a level 3, with pattern-boring. Mike Cann and Charlie Moran said that they were satisfied with the proposed scope of the survey. Vince O'Connor asked that no present property owners be discommoded. Rob Crowner asked about the southern boundary of the common and its relation to the Nathaniel Coleman House. On the map provided by the Commission, there were several pieces of land marked by question-marks; these were discussed, and it was understood that these pieces of land, all small triangular plots at "choke-points" at intersections, should be included in the survey.

2. Atkins Corner

The Committee considered making recommendations on the 25% review of the plans for the reconstruction of the intersections at Atkins Corner. The Committee ultimately decided not to make recommendations. The discussion included these topics:

Vince O'Connor recommended that there be no commercial development between the two roundabouts. Mike Cann noted that traffic was heavy at this intersection in morning and evening rush-hours, and wondered if there would not be more accidents there involving heavy vehicles turning east and west. Guilford Mooring responded that the intersection with its roundabouts was designed to slow traffic, and that heavy vehicles would be slowed to 10-15 mph to negotiate the turns. Vince O'Connor wondered whether the roundabout designs would encourage trucks to cut corners; Guilford Mooring responded that the roundabouts and intersections included cobbled truck aprons that would create room for the heavy vehicles. Mike Cann asked if the stacking lane for northbound traffic at the Hampshire College entrance was necessary; Don George noted that stacking lanes were useful in that they reduced rear-end collisions and speeded traffic flow. Guilford Mooring felt that the stacking lane was necessary; several Committee members were unsure. Mike Cann noted that people at Applewood would still have concerns about sidewalks. Guilford Mooring mentioned that Hampshire College is considering installing a new road off the corner of the Atkins Market bypass into their property in that area, which would potentially provide frontage for commercial or mixed development between Applewood and Atkins Market. Guilford also stated, in response to Rob Crowner's question, that the pedestrian crossings at the roundabouts would not be signalized, though pedestrian right of way would still apply legally. Vince O'Connor felt strongly that there should not be regular pedestrian traffic across West Street/116 south of the roundabouts, though there should a way for people to access the old trolley bed on the east side of the street.

3. University Drive

Guilford Mooring presented the first stages of planning for the reconstruction of University Drive. He divided the project into three sections: the Big Y intersection, a middle section, and the Amity Street intersection. He presented the initial plans for the first of these sections for comment from PWC. The plans for this section of the project are designed to prevent service road-traffic from crossing the Big Y entrance, and to ease congestion for southbound traffic on University Drive wanting to make a right-hand turn to go west on Route 9. Mooring outlined three possible configurations for University Drive: the three-lane (suicide) option, boulevard with service road, and boulevard without service roads. He noted that the Big Y piece of the project is ready to go. The design includes a double left turn lane from Route 9 onto University Drive, which would immediately feed into one through lane and one turn lane into Big Y. This is part of the WalMart traffic mitigation plan. The current traffic island would be moved or reduced or moved AND reduced and could be re-moved or re-sized if the double turn lane doesn't work out or the Superwalmart never materializes. Also, a traffic island would be added to the north of the Big Y entrance, a traffic light would be installed, and the crosswalk would be moved south away from the driveway of the health center/senior housing to coincide with the traffic light and Big Y entrance. There was some discussion about whether the new crosswalk location would be acceptable to users in the area.

4. O'Connor Request to Select Board

Vince O'Connor distributed copies of his letter to the Select Board, asking that they sponsor a Town Meeting article that would add moneys to the Public Works budget for the purpose of filling potholes on specified streets. The Committee's discussion was informal, because Vince was not there to support his proposal. Charlie Moran felt that this was asking Town Meeting to micromanage Public Works; several speakers noted that there simply wasn't

money available in the Town budget since the override had not passed and since there were over-runs in most Town departments in the present fiscal year. Mike Cann noted that potholes were filled as the byproduct of other projects: when a partial load of asphalt became available, potholes were filled. It was the sense of the Committee that they would not support this motion if it came to Town Meeting.

5. Mill Lane

The Committee considered a letter to residents of Mill Lane. As the discussion proceeded, it became clear that the Committee needed to know what "paving" Mill Lane would entail, and what the costs and benefits of this paving would be. So full discussion of this project was deferred until next meeting.

The next meeting was set for 7:00 July 10.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlie Moran, secretary pro tem